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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAQ - ELECTIONS DAFUR
SYRIA - UN AGREEMENT ON LEBANON ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS
PARIS - MONDAY, APRIL 04, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. IRAQ - ELECTIONS
2. DAFUR
3. SYRIA - UN AGREEMENT ON LEBANON
4. ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE OVERWHELMING COVERAGE DEVOTED TO THE LIFE AND DEATH OF POPE JOHN PAUL II LEAVES LITTLE ROOM TO OTHER STORIES. RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO ON SATURDAY CARRIED AN INTERVIEW WITH FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN POWELL, AND MONDAY'S LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION CARRIES TWO OP-EDS, ONE DEVOTED TO AMERICA'S INTERVENTION IN IRAQ AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE IRAQI ELECTIONS, THE OTHER DEVOTED TO DAFUR AND TO HOW AMERICA'S OPPOSITION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMES COURT HAS DELAYED THE UN VOTE. (SEE PART C)

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES A REPORT ON MUGABE'S RE-ELECTION IN ZIMBABWE AND ONE ON THE AGREEMENT REACHED AT THE UN ON SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON. (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAQ - ELECTIONS

"IRAQ, A PHASE FOR COMPROMISES"

ZAKI LAIDI IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (04/04): "UNTIL THE ELECTIONS, OUR COLLECTIVE JUDGMENT ON THE SITUATION IN IRAQ WAS THAT THE U.S. INTERVENTION WAS PRACTICALLY A COMPLETE FAILURE. TODAY, AFTER THE FALL OF SADDAM'S REGIME AND THE ELECTIONS, IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO LOOK ON THE IRAQI SITUATION WITH SUCH PESSIMISM. WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE A MAJOR POLITICAL FACT: THE ELECTIONS HAVE OPENED THE WAY TO A NEW POLITICAL DYNAMIC IN IRAQ. THE ELECTIONS WERE A SUCCESS BECAUSE, FOR TWO THIRDS OF THE IRAQI POPULATION, IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD. WHILE THE VOTE DOES NOT OPEN AN AVENUE TO DEMOCRACY, IT DOES OPEN A DOOR. TO A CULTURE OF COMPROMISE, WHICH IS A MAJOR INGREDIENT IN THE CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY. THE AMERICANS, FOR THEIR PART, HAVE LEARNED GREATLY FROM THEIR INTERVENTION, WHICH MILITARILY SPEAKING REMAINS A MIDRANGE INTERVENTION. THEY LEARNED QUICKLY THAT THEIR SOLDIERS IN BAGHDAD WERE NOT THE MOST CREDIBLE AND SOON ACCEPTED TO COMPOSE WITH OTHERS. THE IRAQIS RE-CAPTURED THE ELECTIONS, A FACT WHICH CAN ONLY MAKE THE U.S. HAPPY, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. IF THE TRANSITION PROCEEDS WELL, THE QUESTION OF U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL WILL SOON BE AN ISSUE. THE MAIN CHALLENGE WILL BE TO FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN WASHINGTON'S DESIRE TO HAVE A POLITICAL BASE IN IRAQ, AND THE IRAQI POLITICAL FORCES' NEED FOR A U.S. PRESENCE AS AN ARBITER. AMERICA CAN BECOME THE REFEREE OF IRAQ'S INTERNAL POLITICAL GAME, WHICH IS WASHINGTON'S GOAL, WITHOUT GIVING THE IMPRESSIONS IT IS SOMETHING IMPOSED FROM THE OUTSIDE. IF THIS SCENARIO SUCCEEDS, AMERICA'S INTERVENTION IN IRAQ WILL MARK A MAJOR CHANGE IN INTERNATIONAL WORLD ORDER, CONFIRMING AMERICA'S ABILITY TO OPERATE SUCH CHANGES AROUND THE WORLD WHENEVER ITS INTERESTS ARE AT STAKE. IF THIS HYPOTHESIS IS CONFIRMED, OUR OPINION OF THE INTERVENTION WILL, RETROSPECTIVELY, BE GREATLY MODIFIED. OUR OPINION WILL ITSELF INCREASE AMERICA'S POWER AROUND THE WORLD AS WELL AS THE FEAR IT CAN INSTILL. THE ABSENCE OF DEMOCRACY IS INDEED THE ARAB WORLD'S PLAGUE. WE HAVE TO CREDIT THE AMERICANS FOR STATING THIS OBVIOUS FACT, EVEN IF THEIR METHODS ARE AT TIMES BRUTAL AND THE POLICIES CONTRADICTIONARY."

DAFUR

"DAFUR: AMERICA'S INERTIA"

JACQUES AMALRIC IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (04/04): "TIME IS PRESSING IN DAFUR, IF THOSE WHO SAID 'NEVER AGAIN' AFTER THE RWANDA MASSACRES WANT TO BE CREDIBLE. THE UN SECURITY COUNSEL DILLY-DALLIED FOR OVER TWO MONTHS BEFORE ADOPTING THE RESOLUTION ON THE ICC AND DAFUR CRIMINALS. THE U.S. IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS DELAY BECAUSE OF ITS REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE COURT'S JURISDICTION. THIS IS WHAT IS CALLED THE KISSINGER

SYNDROME. TO SATISFY THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, THE EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF THE UNSC ACCEPTED A CERTAIN CATEGORY OF U.S. PERSONNEL TO BE EXEMPTED FROM POTENTIAL FUTURE PURSUITS, LEADING TO WASHINGTON'S ABSTENTION, RATHER THAN A VETO."

SYRIA - UN AGREEMENT ON LEBANON

"AGREEMENT ON A WITHDRAWAL"

PIERRE PRIER IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/04): "ON PAPER, DAMASCUS HAS MADE MAJOR CONCESSIONS. DOES THIS MEAN THAT A PAGE HAS BEEN TURNED IN DAMASCUS, CLOSING THE EPISODE OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE UN? DOES THIS MEAN A DOOR HAS BEEN OPENED ON A NEW PHASE IN WHICH SYRIA WILL BE GRATIFIED WITH NEGOTIATIONS OVER ITS LOST TERRITORIES? FOR SYRIA'S FM, THE ANSWER IS DEFINITELY YES. BUT FOR THE UN, THINGS ARE NOT SO SIMPLE. IN SPITE OF THE SIGNS OF GOODWILL SHOWN DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE, NEGOTIATIONS WERE VERY TIGHT. THE TRIANGULAR GAME BETWEEN SYRIA, LEBANON AND THE UN, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE U.S. AND FRANCE, SEEMS FAR FROM OVER. FOR SYRIA, THE SIGNED AGREEMENT IS AN END IN ITSELF. BUT THE UN REMAINS WATCHFUL ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SYRIA'S PROMISES AND WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH APPEARANCES. FOR THE UN, WASHINGTON AND PARIS, THE STORY DOES NOT END HERE. PRESSURE WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE WITHDRAWAL IS COMPLETE AND CAN BE VERIFIED, AND UNTIL THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN LEBANON IS ACHIEVED."

ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

"MUGABE'S VICTORY: NO SURPRISE"

CAROLINE DUMAY IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/04): "MUGABE'S VICTORY IS A SURPRISE FOR NO ONE. HE COMES FROM THE COUNTRY'S MAJORITY ETHNIC GROUP AND HAS AN UNDENIABLE HOLD ON RURAL AREAS. MUGABE'S MESSAGE TO BLAIR, THE EU AND ALL THOSE WHO HAVE ACCUSED HIM OF BREAKING DEMOCRATIC RULES, IS QUITE CLEAR: HE IS THE UNDISPUTED LEADER IN HIS COUNTRY." LEACH